

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 /104 W  
-----029947 010736Z /11

R 311537Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9785  
INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 9444

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PEPR, NI, CA, NZ  
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN BOYCOTT OF COMMONWEALTH GAMES

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. NIGERIA'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON JULY 26, 1978  
THAT IT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMONWEALTH  
GAMES SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST IN EDMONTON, CANADA,  
HAS BEEN ACCLAIMED IN PRESS EDITORIALS. IN MAKING  
ITS ANNOUNCEMENT, THE FMG SAID THE DECISION WAS  
TAKEN AS A RESULT OF NEW ZEALAND'S "BRAZEN FLOUTINGS"  
OF THE GLENEAGLES DECLARATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH  
COUNTRIES WHICH REQUIRES MEMBER STATES TO  
SEVER ALL SPORTING RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.  
ACCORDING TO THE FMG, NEW ZEALAND HAS CONSISTENTLY  
CIRCUMVENTED THE TECHNICAL STIPULATIONS OF THE  
DECLARATION BY HAVING ITS TEAM MEMBERS TRAVEL TO  
SOUTH AFRICA AS INDIVIDUALS AND COMBINING AS A TEAM  
ONCE THEY ARE INSIDE THE COUNTRY. THE FMG STRESSED  
THAT THE DECISION IS NOT A PROTEST AGAINST CANADA,  
BUT IS AIMED SOLELY AT NEW ZEALAND.  
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2. NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT  
HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE. THE PAPERS HAVE ALSO REPORTED  
INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE DECISION AS ONE OF  
SHOCK, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND SURPRISE. MEMBERS OF  
THE NIGERIAN ATHLETIC CONTINGENT HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO  
VIEW THE DECISION AS A CORRECT ONE, CONSISTENT WITH

THE NIGERIAN BOYCOTT OF THE 1976 OLYMPIC GAMES IN MONTREAL. REPORTEDLY, THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS RECEIVED WITH "ACCLAMATION" IN THE TEAM'S CAMP. NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER ROBERT MULDOON HAS ALSO BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE ALLEGATIONS OF CONTINUED SPORTS CONTACTS ARE BASED "ON EXAGGERATED AND INACCURATE INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY A NEW ZEALAND ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP CALLED HALT ALL ROAD TOURS (HART). END UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

3. COMMENT: CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER LEGAULT TOLD POLCOUNS THAT CANADA WAS TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE BECAUSE, UP TO THE TIME OF THE OAU KHARTOUM CONFERENCE AND THE ALL-AFRICA GAMES IN ALGIERS, HE HAD BEEN ASSURED BY FORMER MEA COMMISSIONER GARBA THAT NIGERIA WOULD NOT SPEARHEAD ANY MOVE TO BOYCOTT THE GAMES. WOULD ATTEMPT TO SIDETRACK AND SUCH MOVE THAT CAME TO NIGERIA'S ATTENTION, AND WOULD ITSELF BOYCOTT THE GAMES ONLY IF THE DECISION TO DO SO WERE MADE BY OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS. LEGAULT ALSO SAID THAT NIGERIAN SPORTSMEN WERE ANXIOUS TO ATTEND AND THAT PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL FOR SPORTS IN AFRICA (SCSA). A. ORDIA HAD TOLD HIM HE HAD MANAGED TO GET SCSA ENDORSEMENT BY LOBBYING HARD WITH SEVERAL RELUCTANT CONFIDENTIAL

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MEMBERS.

4. AS THE ALGERIA GAMES AND THE OAU MEETINGS PROGRESSED WITHOUT THE SUBJECT ARISING, THE CANADIANS DECIDED THEY WERE IN THE CLEAR AND PROCEED TO FINALIZE THEIR PLANS. KEY NIGERIANS, INCLUDING THEN COMMISSIONER FOR LABOR, YOUTH, SPORTS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, ADEFOPE, MRS. ADEFOPE, AND MR. AND MRS. ORDIA AND FAMILY APPLIED FOR AND WERE ISSUED VISAS (REPORTEDLY THE ORDIA FAMILY HAD ALREADY LEFT NIGERIA WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE).

5. LEGAULT WAS CALLED IN BY MEA'S PERMSEC UKEGBU THE DAY BEFORE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT AND ASSURED THAT NIGERIA'S WITHDRAWAL WAS NOT DIRECTED AT CANADA. WHEN ASKED WHY NIGERIA WAS WITHDRAWING, UKEGBU ALLEGED THAT NEW ZEALAND ATHLETES HAD CIRCUMVENTED THE GLENEAGLES DECLARATION BY TRAVELLING INDIVIDUALLY TO SOUTH AFRICA AND THEN FORMING A TEAM AFTER ENTERING THE COUNTRY. ACCORDING TO LEGAULT, THE TRUE STORY IS THAT SOME NEW ZEALANDERS HAD TRAVELLED TO SOUTH AFRICA INDIVIDUALLY AND JOINED A TEAM

COMPRISED OF MANY NATIONALITIES TO PLAY RUGBY,  
WHICH IS NOT IN VIOLATION OF THE GLENEAGLES  
DECLARATION.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 IO-13 /104 W  
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R 311537Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9786  
INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LAGOS 9444

6. IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT OTHER AFRICAN COMMON-  
WEALTH NATIONS FROM FOLLOWING SUIT, LEGAULT  
AND CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONERS IN FRONT LINE  
STATES WERE INSTRUCTED BY OTTAWA ON JULY 1 TO DELIVER LETTERS  
SIGNED BY CANADA'S ACTING PRIME MINISTER  
ATTACKING THE REASON FOR NIGERIA'S WITHDRAWAL AND  
POINTING OUT THE MOVE WOULD HAD AMMUNITION TO  
INTERNAL ELEMENTS IN CANADA WHO OPPOSE THE GOVERN-  
MENT'S PRO-BLACK AFRICA FOREIGN POLICY. ACCORDING  
TO LEGAULT, UKEGBU DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ANY  
UNDERSTANDING OF CANADA'S INTERNAL POLITICAL  
PROBLEMS OR TO CARE. LEGAULT OBSERVED THAT,  
WITH ELECTIONS COMING UP, THIS MIGHT BE THE ISSUE  
THAT WOULD CAUSE THE GOVERNMENT'S DOWNFALL AND  
A NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES VIS-A-VIS AFRICA  
AND NIGERIA WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY MORE CONSERVATIVE.  
HE ALSO NOTED THAT NEW ZEALAND IS MAKING REPRESENTA-  
TIONS ON THE GROUNDS THAT NIGERIA DID NOT CALL FOR  
CONSULTATIONS BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT AS PROVIDED  
FOR BY THE GLENEAGLES DECLARATION.

7. THE CANADIANS ARE PUZZLED OVER NIGERIA'S ABRUPT VOLTE-FACE.  
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ONE CONJECTURE IS THAT NIGERIA'S UN AMBASSADOR LESLIE HARRIMAN, WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF THE UN ANTI-APARTHEID COMMITTEE, PRESSED HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO FOR NIGERIA'S WITHDRAWAL WHEN BOTH WERE IN KHARTOUM. ANOTHER IS THAT THE DECISION WAS A GESTURE TOWARD THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS OF THE SMC IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL STABILITY.

8 LEGAULT EXPRESSED FEAR THAT ORDIA WAS FINISHED AS PRESIDENT OF THE SCSA BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN FIGHTING FOR AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMES. DAILY TIMES OF JULY 31 QUOTED ORDIA ON HIS RETURN FROM ALGIERS AS SAYING "NIGERIA CHOSE THE PATH OF HONOR. IT MAKES ME VERY PROUD...I SHALL NEVER CHANGE MY STAND. I HAVE ALWAYS FOUGHT AND WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT AGAINST THAT EVIL CALLED APARTHEID UNTIL IT IS COMPLETELY ERADICATED." HOWEVER, WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON FOREIGN NEWSPAPER STATEMENTS CREDITED TO HIM ON SCSA'S DECISION TO ALLOW AFRICAN NATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN EDMONTON, ORDIA DECLINED TO SPEAK AS HEAD OF THE COUNCIL AND EXPLAINED THAT THE COUNCIL'S DECISION WAS TAKEN BEFORE NIGERIA'S ANNOUNCEMENT.  
END CONFIDENTIAL  
WYMAN

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## Message Attributes

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